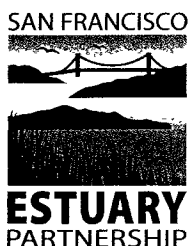


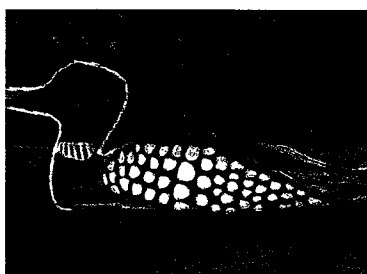
PROJECT TO PARTNERSHIP

When is a project no longer a project but recognized as a large-scale collaborative effort expected to continue for years to come? That is the question we asked ourselves a few months back. After discussions among the staff and the Implementation Committee, we have become the San Francisco Estuary Partnership, to better reflect the real nature of our work. We are pleased to unveil our new name, logo, and newsletter look, and to recommit ourselves to protecting, restoring, and enhancing the resources of our beloved Estuary



One of our new collaborations is with River of Words (www.riverofwords.org), in which we sponsored a K-12 environmental art and poetry contest. View the results at www.sfestuary.org, and watch for the poems and art in this and future issues of ESTUARY NEWS, and at our 2009 State of the Estuary conference September 29-October 1. And speaking of art, we are sponsoring another contest, open to all ages, winners to be displayed at the conference. Read about it on page 3, and help spread the word

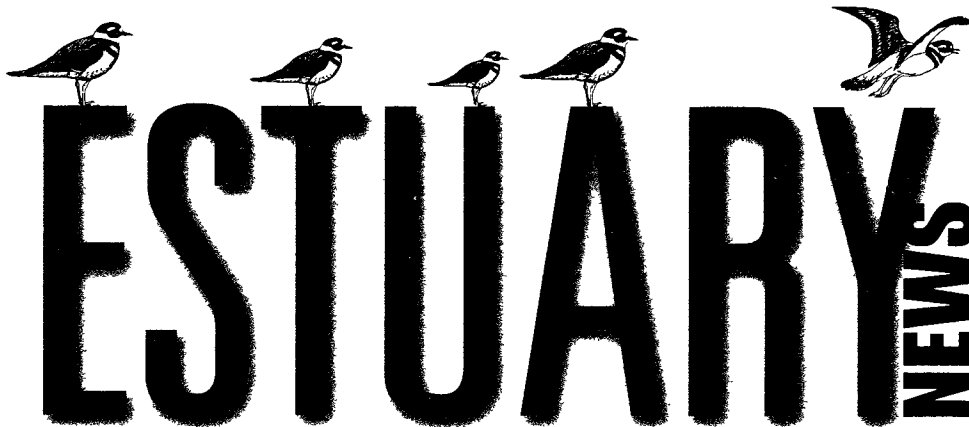
—Judy Kelly



LOON: 2009 Creek Seeker Prize
Sarah Thomas, age 14, Richmond, CA
Island Studio (El Cerrito) Teacher: Sandi Potter

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Bay-Delta News and Views from the San Francisco Estuary Partnership | Volume 17, No.3 | June 2009

INFILL OR BAY FILL?

Depending on whom you ask, the reincarnation of 1,433 acres of South Bay crystallizer ponds along the shores of Redwood City as a residential/recreational development with a wetland restoration component is either a spectacular example of new urbanist infill or poorly-timed Bay fill—and one of the largest Bay fills proposed in years. The proposal—known as the “Redwood City Saltworks”—by Cargill Salt and DMB Associates to build housing, along with soccer, baseball, football fields, and some restored wetlands, has spawned two local ballot measures (both of which failed), and a raging debate over the best use of these salt crystallizer ponds still owned and used by Cargill. The property was not included in the public acquisition of the South Bay Salt Ponds in 2003.

Historically, the crystallizer ponds—now used to dry out Bay salt—were Bay wetlands. Aerial photos taken in 1943 show that much of the area “was fully tidal, with great sloughs and dendritic channels,” according to Citizens’ Committee to Complete the Refuge’s Arthur Feinstein. Even in more recent aerial photos, says the Bay Conservation and Development Commission’s (BCDC) Will Travis, “on some of the ponds you can still see the old sloughs.”

“We could actually let wetland creep occur here if we could save this site and restore it.”

Some question the wisdom not only of filling former wetlands, but also in putting housing and other hard structures along the edge of the Bay as sea level rises, especially since so much of the Bay’s edge is already “hardened.” Wetlands act as buffers, helping attenuate

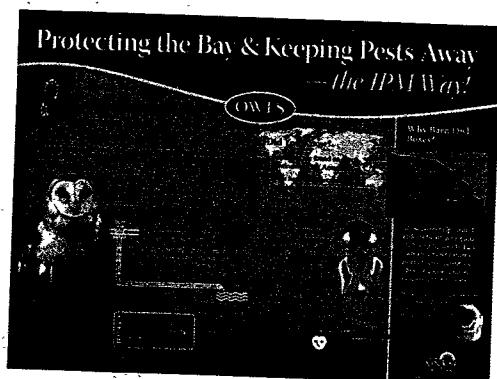
higher waters and storm events, but they need room to migrate landward. “We could actually let wetland creep occur here if we could save this site and restore it,” says Feinstein.

DMB, Cargill’s Arizona-based partner in the development, whose slogan is “a passion for great places,” says wetlands will be part of the project—but backed on their landward side by a series of giant levees. Says DMB’s John Bruno, “We recognize that sea level rise conditions need to be addressed. What we’re proposing is a new public and private partnership where we will be creating levees at our expense that not only protect the site but also all the low-lying areas around it. We will have a highly structured series of levees that address sea level rise.”

But the issues of historical wetlands, sea level rise, and wetland creep seem to have taken a back seat to a debate on whether the site is sustainable, new urbanist “infill” development, or simply bad planning. Bruno insists that the project is in fact infill. “We’re creating a new peninsula community where people can live close to work—within a five-mile radius of some of the largest employers in all of California. We have spoken to those employers: housing for executives that’s close and affordable is their number one issue. You have an economic dynamic taking place: can you continue to sustain economic growth for companies in San Mateo County if you don’t have housing? How do you provide efficient modes of transportation by which people can get to and from work? You do it by creating new communities and opportunities.” Bruno says the development will encourage new shuttle systems in Redwood City that will stop at CalTrain. “We believe we can be the catalyst for new transit; there’s a proposed new ferry terminal, lots of ways to create new transit linkages.”

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SAN JOSE KNOWS THE WAY (TO A CLEAN BAY)



As part of a new partnership between Save the Bay and San Jose, the state's third-largest city could become a role model for other cities attempting to tackle the quality of their runoff into the Bay. The first to sign on to Save the Bay "Cities Keep it Clean" program last fall, San Jose has pledged—through a city council resolution—to implement several voluntary measures designed to improve water quality, including banning plastic bags or charging a fee for them, holding zero-waste community events, working with hospitals and pharmacies to keep pharmaceuticals out of wastewater, and expanding its use of Integrated Pest Management, among others.

The city recently installed 34 barn owl boxes in city parks and eight bat boxes in community gardens. "We're monitoring and inspecting the boxes a few times per year," says San Jose's Matt Weber. "We'll give it at least three years and relocate them if they're not working in those sites." Just as importantly, says Weber, is the fact that the effort has been highly popular with residents. "We've gotten a lot of positive feedback, and it's certainly been helpful in educating the public about pesticides and water quality and stormwater runoff."

Owls and bats aren't the only alternative pest controllers being used: sheep and goats will munch on about 500 acres of weedy city land this year. Grazing helped the city avoid using about 77 pounds of herbicide in 2008, says Weber, and reduced emissions from gas-powered mowers.

All eyes will be on San Jose, says Save the Bay's Jessica Castelli. "Because their population is so large, any actions they take to reduce polluted runoff are going to have a huge impact on protecting the Bay. By working with them, we're opening the door for other cities to notice and say 'Hey, San Jose is doing it; we probably should too.'"

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INFILL OR BAY FILL? (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Responds Feinstein, "This is not infill, there's no city there this is a whole brand new development. It's isolated because of Highway 101, and 101 isolates it from CalTrain—the idea that this is the perfect transit hub can quickly be seen as wrong."

In 2008, Save the Bay sponsored Measure W, which would have altered the Redwood City charter to allow voters, instead of city council members, to decide the fate of development on land zoned open space. The crystallizers are currently zoned as "tidal plain" for "mineral use, salt making, and other open space," according to Save the Bay's David Lewis. But opponents worried that the measure would force homeowners to ask the city to approve every home improvement project, and the measure failed. Redwood City countered Save the Bay's measure with its own Measure V, which

"How it plays out/how we decide to respond and handle this as a society will be very interesting. This is probably the ultimate test case of what we should do about climate change and sea level rise." —Will Travis, BCDC

would have changed the charter so that only decisions related to the Cargill salt works site required a vote. Measure V failed as well.

Ultimately, the decision on whether to approve the project—for now, still a conceptual design—will come down in part to BCDC (although Cargill disagrees that BCDC has jurisdiction over the crystallizers, it has agreed to abide by BCDC's rules), and regulators like the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the S.F. Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board. In March, DMB briefed BCDC commissioners on its "50/50 balanced approach" conceptual plan ("50% for wetlands restoration, recreation, and open space uses and 50% for a mix of housing and community uses"), which it stresses has had input from over 10,000 citizens, the design talents of Peter Calthorpe and other experts, and the endorsement of the Redwood City-San Mateo County Chamber of Commerce, the San Mateo County Economic Development Association, the San Mateo County Association of Realtors, the Bay Planning Coalition, and the Peninsula Coalition.

Says BCDC's Will Travis, "Both positions have great merit. How it plays out/how we decide to respond and handle this as a society will be very interesting. This is probably the ultimate test case of what we should do about climate change and sea level rise."

But sea level rise is not the only worry. The site is near Bair Island and Greco Island, both full of clapper rails and other wildlife. Artists' conceptual renderings of the project on DMB's web site show

bicyclists pedaling just a few feet from the Bay and kayakers paddling through placid wetlands—possibly next to endangered rails and other sensitive species. "A critical point," says Feinstein, "is that this project is within the [authorized] boundary of the Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge."

Says Lewis, "There is no question about what should be done out there with sea level rise and flooding issues, the area should be kept undeveloped, restored to tidal marsh." He points out that the same type of crystallizer ponds in Napa have been successfully restored. And Feinstein adds that restoring crystallizer ponds is hardly rocket science, citing LaRiviere Marsh in the South Bay as an example. "It was a crystallizer. In 10 years after digging a ditch without any science it's now full of clapper rails and shorebirds."

As ESTUARY NEWS went to press, no formal development application had yet been filed by Cargill/DMB. But, says Lewis, "Maps show 20,000-30,000 people. That's a 50% growth in the

size of Redwood City." Did DMB/Cargill consider any alternative sites for this development?

Says Bruno, "Back in 2003 this property along with an additional 16,000 acres was offered up for sale to the U.S. government for restoration. The government had a fixed amount of money to spend, this parcel in Redwood City was taken out of the large transaction that is the salt pond restoration project. So Cargill is asking now whether production of industrial salts is the highest and best use of the property. The alternative [to not developing the site] is that Cargill continues to make salt there, with no money for acquisition, no money for restoration."

Unless money is found for public acquisition—and Cargill would have to decide to discard its Redwood City Saltworks plans and become a willing seller—the S.F. Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board may have the last word, when it determines whether or not the crystallizer ponds are waters of the state and the project constitutes Bay fill. "That's the \$64,000 question," says the Water Board's Bruce Wolfe. "When it came up as part of the South Bay Salt Pond Project in 2000-2001, it was never conclusively defined by the federal agencies. In our view, there's definitely a proposed jurisdictional impact, yet a determination on how much has yet to be made."

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